The fabric of trade

During my diplomatic assignment in Indonesia two decades ago, I was fascinated by the country’s textile industry, in particular the so-called “batik.” I was drawn to the intricate patterns and the intimate relationship between the cultural traditions of India and Indonesia that led to a very successful exhibition of Indian and contemporary textiles in the two countries, entitled “The World of Indian Textiles.”

Textiles in the East

Shyam Saran

Bhutan, 1996. To the north, in the New York Met., I had discovered the most remarkable collection of Bhutanese textiles ever exhibited to the public. I have been reading about textile history for more than several years, but this exhibition immediately caught my attention. I was struck by the beauty and craftsmanship of the textiles, which had a significant impact on me.

The volume, which has been archived in my library, was entitled “Bhutanese Textiles.” It is a comprehensive study of the history and culture of Bhutanese textiles, written by renowned textile expert, Dr. John Guy. The book is a must-read for anyone interested in textile history.

The exhibition was curated by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, and it was hosted in collaboration with the Embassy of Bhutan. The exhibition featured over 100 objects, including textiles, clothing, and accessories, which were displayed in a chronological order, highlighting the evolution of Bhutanese textiles from the 10th century to the present day.

The exhibition was a great success, and it received positive reviews from textile scholars and enthusiasts. It was a unique opportunity to learn about the history and culture of Bhutanese textiles and to appreciate the beauty and craftsmanship of these exquisite textiles.